

SEATTLE-KING COUNTY DIVISION ON AGING

A BRIEF HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

The Seattle-King County Division on Aging, the designated “area agency on aging” for Seattle and the balance of King County, was established through an interlocal agreement in July 1973 as a result of an evolution which began in 1956 with the creation of United Way’s Council on Aging. The division on Aging has evolved since 1956 to become one of the nation’s premier offices on aging through the steadily increasing efforts and commitments of the Division’s three Sponsors—United Way, the City of Seattle and King County. These efforts have been supported and stimulated through an extensive degree of citizen participation in aging program planning and development, first by the Council on Aging and, since 1973, by the Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging.

As the agency designated to advocate and plan for the needs of King County’s older persons, the Division is charged to work with its Sponsors and citizen advisors to assure the responsive utilization of federal, state and community resources to enhance the life quality of the area’s older persons. To this end, the Division has several roles.

These roles include: identifying and appropriately responding to gaps in basic services and service systems; planning needed programs and service innovations; promoting the efficient and effective delivery of community services impacting older persons; allocating the relatively limited Division fiscal resources according to identified priorities; supporting and promoting a positive image of aging within the community; and providing leadership in advocating for the interests and aspirations of low-income and at-risk older persons. These roles are carried out in conjunction with the Division’s Sponsors and the Advisory Council. The evolution of the Division on Aging can be divided into six parts that reflect both a deliberate, planned intent to change the focus of the agency and a response to external events and pressures.

1. PRE-AREA AGENCY ON AGING, 1956-1972

United Way initiated interest in addressing the social service needs of older persons on a community-wide basis in 1956 with the creation of the Council on Aging. The Council on Aging was established to provide services to older citizens of Seattle-King County. The formation of the Council pioneered the concept of community-wide organizing and addressing actions on behalf of older citizens in need. The Council was active until 1974 when it was dissolved in favor of the newly established area agency on aging.

In 1967, United Way initiated the concept of an umbrella aging agency through the creation of Senior Services and Centers. In 1965, the Older Americans Act was enacted creating a specified amount of federal funds for programs to persons 60 years of age and older. The initial Act provided for the establishment of social and recreational programs and nutrition services for the elderly. Early Older Americans Act funds were instrumental in the development of strong senior center and center-based nutrition programs. Because of the early work of United Way, there was a ready operator of these services in King County—Senior Services and Centers.

In 1971, the City of Seattle established an Office of Human Resources within the Executive Department and, later that year, created the Division on Aging within that Office. Initially, the Division on Aging had little funding to administer, but with expansion of Older Americans Act funding in 1971 and 1972, the Division began coordinating and purchasing services within Seattle.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEM, 1973-1975

Two extremely significant events occurred during 1973. Congress amended the Older Americans Act to create a national network on aging, calling for and funding the establishment of State Units on Aging and local area agencies on aging that would plan, coordinate and operate services for the elderly. The State Unit on Aging was responsible for “designating” the local entity to administer the agency on aging and thus Older Americans Act funds that followed. The City of Seattle, King County and United Way signed an interlocal agreement establishing the City’s Division on Aging as the jointly sponsored agency to perform those functions and receive Older Americans Act funds. The Seattle-King County Division on Aging was then designated by the Washington State Office on Aging to be the area agency on aging for the King County catchment area.

During this period, the Division on Aging focused its attention on the development of mandated services and service providers. Mandated services included congregate and home-delivered meals, information and referral, transportation and outreach. Subcontracts were established for the provision of services by community-based agencies. The School Program Involving Our (*) City’s Elderly (SPICE) was developed in 1974. Many of the services for which the Division on Aging subcontracted were through the Mainstay Program established in 1971 under Senior Services and Centers. The total budget of the Division on Aging in 1974 was \$705,355.

- (*) Changed in 1991 to Community (from City’s) to adapt for national program.

III. FEDERAL/STATE PARTNERSHIP AND STRENGTHENING OF THE LOCAL NETWORK, 1976-1979

This era was marked by a significant increase in the amount of service dollars available to the Division on Aging with the passage of the State-funded Senior Citizens Services Act (SCSA) in 1976. SCSA largely mirrored the Older Americans Act with its high degree of flexibility and local discretion. A very different fund source—federal Title XX funds—also came to the Division on Aging during that period with the establishment of the chore services program under the area agencies on aging in 1979. The chore services program was the largest non-discretionary grant program that the Division on Aging had ever received. It formed the foundation of non-medical home care in Washington state.

The Division on Aging took a significant step in 1979 by deciding to split the Information and Assistance/Outreach functions and directly administer the Outreach, later to become Case Management, component.

The Division on Aging also began to strengthen its advocacy capacity during this period, due partly to the 1978/79 reauthorization of the Older Americans Act that put a heavy emphasis on advocacy. Toward this end, the Division on Aging developed a local arm of the Senior Citizens Lobby—the Senior Communications Network. As it turned out, the emphasis on advocacy was to pay off in the next few years.

In 1978, the Interlocal Agreement was renegotiated, establishing clearer roles among the Sponsors and the Advisory Council. Also in 1978, the King County Office of Senior Programs was created to plan and administer specific senior programs on behalf of the County, in Cooperation with the Division on Aging.

By 1980, the total budget of the Division on Aging was \$9.1 million.

IV. NARROWING THE SERVICE FOCUS AND RESPONDING TO FEDERAL/STATE CUTS, 1980-1984

Substantial cuts were felt during this time period. The Older Americans Act received its first reductions, after many years of growth, and the State responded to the dramatic growth and popularity of the chore services program by instituting revisions to the program that cut a number of elderly off the program and denied access to many more.

In response to federal reductions, the Division on Aging emphasized its processes for the allocation of funds and established service funding priorities. Programs

that did not fall in the Division's priority areas or that did not serve priority clients were reduced or eliminated. "Targeting" of services to persons who are low-income, over age 75, minority, limited English speaking or living alone was emphasized. In 1983, the State established a new formula for the distribution of Older Americans Act and SCSA funds that included the targeting characteristics of persons residing in the catchment area. Of greatest interest was the inclusion of both the number of minority and limited English speaking elderly as weighting factors in the formula. Washington remains one of only a few states to include both.

The dramatic cuts in chore services had the Division emphasizing its advocacy role by attempting to influence the Bureau of Aging in DSHS and the legislature to increase funding rather than cut services. Following the cuts in 1981, United Way stepped forward by establishing Project Transition which provided specially raised United Way funds to agencies providing chore services to help offset service cuts to clients.

The Division on Aging established numerous successful strategies to increase the participation of minority elderly in aging services. By using a combination of contract requirements and performance goals, special service/provider development and overall increased funding, the Division on Aging increased the participation of minority elders in aging programs sufficiently to be considered a model area agency on aging in 1984 by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Much of the credit, however, should go to the Minority Executive Directors Coalition which put and kept the heat on the Division to respond to minority elders' special needs.

The Interlocal Agreement was again revised in 1982 in response to members of the King County Council who considered having the County operate the area agency on aging or splitting the responsibilities between the City and County with an area agency in each. The 1982 revision strengthened the Sponsors' role as the policy setting body for the Division on Aging.

In 1983, the total budget of the Division on Aging was \$12.1 million.

V. STRENGTHENING THE DIVISION'S ROLE IN THE AGING NETWORK, 1984-1987

Although largely a continuation of efforts begun in the previous period, especially in targeting of services and narrowing our service focus, this period began the Division's attempt to define its role in the larger aging network. Four major efforts occurred during this period that helped broaden our role. In 1984, a bill in the State Legislature (HB 395) proposed to greatly extend the authority of

area agencies on aging to administer funds and programs at the local level. Although it did not pass, HB 395 began the serious consideration among all area agencies on aging of expanding their role in planning, coordination and administration of services and dollars well beyond those traditionally under the area agency on aging. Deliberations over HB 395 made the area agencies more aware of and interested in services and systems not under their control or mandate at that time, including nursing homes.

This was also a time when Case Management became both a significant service broker and centerpiece for system development. Very detailed standards were established for Case Management programs, funding to Case Management increased, a single entry point system was established locally and Case Management was determined to be an administrative function of area agencies on aging.

The State of Washington applied for and received an innovative federal Title XIX waiver program entitled Community Options Program Entry System (COPES) that allowed the State to spend Title XIX funds on non-medical, community-based services previously reserved for hospital/medical and nursing home care. COPES was intended to divert clients from nursing homes by providing sufficient funds to purchase needed services in the community for up to 80% of the average nursing home cost. Eventually, area agency provided case management became reimbursable with these funds, beginning a trend toward other purchasers of case management services beyond the Older Americans Act and SCSA. This trend was continued when all area agencies signed contracts with Blue Cross of Washington and Alaska to provide case management services as part of a long term care insurance package.

All of these events brought the statewide area agencies closer together as a group and began the early discussions of long term care as a concept and area agencies as players in such a system.

The year 1987 saw the restructuring of DSHS which included the broadening of the Bureau of Aging and Adult Services to the Administration of Aging and Adult Services with increased responsibility for services and systems that assisted disabled adults age 18 and older. The close relationship of the area agencies on aging to their State counterpart was significantly impacted, and area agencies were forced to become better organized in order to represent their point of view. Their point of view was also broadening beyond seniors.

In 1987, a strategic planning committee was formed to explore major issues and propose implementation strategies in long term care.

The total budget for the Division on Aging in 1987 was \$16.7 million.

VI. LONG TERM CARE: EXPANDING THE ROLES OF AREA AGENCIES ON AGING, 1988 TO PRESENT

The Strategic Long Term Care Plan was completed in March 1988. It outlined numerous broad, critical issues in long term care and proposed specific strategies to respond to them. While recognizing that long term care was an issue that cut across age barriers, the Plan focused on the needs of persons 65 and older. Many of the strategies in the Plan became objectives in the 1988-90 area plans. One of the main objectives was to increase State funding of community-based long term care services.

In June 1988, the area agencies from throughout Washington incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) organization and became the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A). Besides increasing their ability to plan, coordinate and develop/respond to policies regarding services for the elderly, the W4A provided an opportunity for the area agencies to work in unison on legislative advocacy. To that end, the Association hired its own lobbyist and developed its own package of legislative priorities for the 1989 legislative session. The package of legislation included support for the services heretofore not considered within the realm of area agencies, such as increased reimbursement rates for adult family homes and congregate care facilities, and mandatory screening of persons entering nursing homes. During that session, the community-based long term care budget increased by over \$77 million, due partly to the involvement of the area agencies.

Besides the overall dollar increase, three significant policy and system design advances were legislated during that session. The passage of a Personal Care Program, similar in some respects to chore services, established the first non-medical/non-institutional entitlement program in Washington state. It also involved area agencies on aging in the contracting of services to younger disabled adults and children.

The statewide expansion of Respite Care services further involved area agencies in services to younger clients, especially developmentally disabled clients. It also recognized, at least in a small way, the case manager as a manager of resources, not only a broker of services. Through the case management program, monthly

allotment of respite service dollars will be managed against the demand for services. Case management staff will authorize services across all types of in-home and residential/institutional service settings.

Finally, legislation was passed that called for a commission to study the provision, administration and financing of long term care to all disabled persons throughout the state. The area agencies will be prominent in discussions and deliberations regarding that issue. There is great potential for the role of area agencies on aging and therefore the Division on Aging to grow in importance in the next few years.

The total budget of the Division on Aging for 1991 is \$23.4 million.